

SERMON, JAN. 12 & 13, 2008 based upon OT lesson, Isaiah 42

Grace, peace and mercy be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Introduction

Sharon and I, began our church work career in Enid, OK many years ago at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School. People down South have a vocabulary all their own. They don't say 'man' but 'may-on'. It's not 'fire', but 'far'. In OK a big business isn't the 'oil business'. It's the 'owl-benis'. The moment we spoke **one word** the evidence was out: 'Ya all ain't from around here, are ya?'

One single word is all it took to prove we were Northerners, we were Yankees, even considered by some to be foreigners in Dixie.

The proof and the conviction on just '**one word**' is even more true if you're the Lord's Servant from our OT lesson, Isaiah 42:

**"Behold My Servant ... He will not cry aloud, or lift up His voice, or make it heard in the street ...
He will faithfully bring forth justice"**

Nope! Jesus isn't going to make a lot of noise to make a scene. Jesus isn't going to cry aloud to get brief attention. Jesus isn't going to lift up His voice in argument. In order to faithfully bring about God's justice.

"BUT, JUST ONE WORD WILL DO IT ALL!"

And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit today, this Sunday of the Baptism of Our Lord.

"JUST ONE WORD FROM JESUS, GOD'S SERVANT, DOES IT ALL!"

I. A single word can carry a lot of authority. Like I shared in our Children's Message. A road sign says 'STOP' and we stop. A bill says 'PAY' and we pay. A parent says 'NO' and we realize the limits are set. It only takes one word. There is no need for shouting about it or cry out about it or raising a voice or making a scene or argument about it. Stop means stop. Pay means pay. No means no.

That power of a word, God's Word, simply doing and accomplishing God's purpose is a common theme in the Book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 40 says 'The grass withers and the flowers fall but the Word of our God stands forever'.

Isaiah 55 says 'So is My Word that goes out from My mouth, it will not return to Me empty'

'JUST ONE WORD FROM GOD'S SERVANT DOES IT ALL!

IT STANDS FOREVER! IT IS NOT EMPTY!

IT ACCOMPLISHES WHAT GOD SAYS!

II. The Servant described in our OT lesson Isaiah 42 is originally presented to people who are experiencing King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Captivity. That's the immediate context of Isaiah 42 being given to God's people. Their temple and capital city, Jerusalem have been destroyed. Their villages and farms and businesses have been burned and demolished. Their families and friends have either been killed or marched away to Babylon into captivity. King Zedekiah (II Kings 24,25) had his eyes gouged out after witnessing his family butchered like animals. These Babylonian captives, God's people, knew defeat first hand.

In Isaiah 40 we hear the lament of God's captive people. They lament "**My way is hidden from the Lord**". It is their voices that cry out. It is their voices that are lifted up. It is their voices that are heard in the street.

If you've ever been divorced by a spouse, if you've ever been abused by a parent or relative, if you've ever been abandoned by a friend, if you've ever experienced a job lay off or financial losses, if you've ever buried a loved one, if you've ever hurt so badly that you can't even express the pain, if you've ever fought demons from your past or are fighting them right now. Then you're the one who knows how God's people were feeling. And what they were experiencing in their Babylonian Captivity at the time of our OT lesson Isaiah 42. Overcome by their despair.

Overwhelmed by their nightmare. Overpowered by this chaos in their lives. Isaiah 56 tells us what God's people do

"Come, let us get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer". Not exactly what you would expect from God's people.

They turn to quick fixes. They turn to temporary help. They self medicate, so to speak, something to drown their sorrows.

In our captivities, you and I, are tempted not to be any different. We're also tempted to turn to what is shallow and superficial. Looking for revenge in a marriage, spouses get tangled in one nite stands, fornication. Wanting to be popular kids hang out in the wrong crowd. Students under pressure to succeed take shortcuts called cheating. Parents

pour everything into their jobs to earn that good life at the expense of their children's lives. Or we drown our troubles in alcohol, prescription drugs or worse. Or overcome, overwhelmed, overpowered out of despair and frustration we can become the abuser or we may abandon people we love by our words and actions. All these things and situations can become our Babylonian Captivity, sins captivity. Just as real and just as awful as the Babylonian Captivity of God's people at the time of Isaiah 42.

III. Then God's Word speaks! Offering an invitation of grace to all in captivity.

"Behold My servant" says God, the Lord "He will not cry aloud, or lift up His voice or make it heard in the street ... He will faithfully bring forth justice".

Just **'One Word'** with a capital 'W' will put right what is so wrong in our sin captive lives. And this **'One Word'** is not a shallow, superficial, a quick fix, but this **'One Word'** of God is life changing, freedom releasing and forever, eternal!

In Acts chapter 8 Phillip meets an Ethiopian eunuch. You may remember the story. The Ethiopian is reading from Isaiah and asks Phillip **"Tell me, please, who is the Prophet talking about?"**

And Phillip simply tells him the Good News about **JESUS!**

Jesus is that **'One Word'** of God made flesh and blood. Jesus is that Servant we are invited to behold in our OT lesson. Jesus, is that **'One Word'** from God that changes everything in our captive lives.

Anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Jesus is thrust into the wilderness. Where Satan tempts Him and Jesus defeats the devil with **one word** in Greek **'ge-grap-tie'**, in English **'It is written'**. To the bruised reeds, to smoldering wicks, to people about to give up like the man with leprosy, Jesus speaks **one word** in Greek **'katha-rishta-tie'** in English **'be clean'**. Swamped in a boat on the Sea of Galilee with frightened disciples. Jesus speaks to the wind and the waves **one word** in Greek **'si-opa'** in English **'be quiet'**. To the deaf and dumb man Jesus speaks **one word** in Greek **'epha-tha'** in English **'be opened'**. The Centurian in Matthew 8 understood the power and the change of God's **'One Word'**. When he pleads to Jesus to cure his servant. **"Just say the word"** Jesus **'and my servant will be healed'**. Just **'One Word'** from Jesus, the Word of God, defeats Satan, heals the leper, calms the sea, gives speech and hearing to the deaf and dumb, cures the Centurian's servant.

Just 'One Word' Jesus, God's Servant!

Jesus, that **'One Word'** of God incarnate, betrayed, arrested, bound, tied, slapped, stripped, beaten, mocked, abandoned, nailed, forsaken hanging on a cross in our place, as our substitute speaks **one more word**. And on account of that **one last word** spoken by Jesus as He died as our Savior God's justice to the nations is heard, pronounced. Just as the Prophet Isaiah said it faithfully would be. Not making a noisy scene. Not just to receive passing attention. Not arguing about anything. Jesus', **one last word**, in Greek **'tet-el-estie'** in English **'It is finished!'**

With His final gasp, His final breath, Jesus announces God's final verdict, God's justice upon us captive sinners which transcends all time:

'tet-el-estie', 'It is finished'.

Conclusion

To the student who holds defeated dreams. To the couple struggling in their marriage. To the good person who fights daily with his sinful nature. To anyone who has felt abuse or abandonment or loneliness or has abused or abandoned or caused others to be lonely. To anyone who tries to drown their troubles in quick but temporary fixes. To anyone who is held in some kind of captivity of body, mind or soul, a bruised reed, a faintly burning wick. Through the cross of Jesus for our sake God speaks **'One Word'** descriptions over us:

loved, atoned, saved, rescued, redeemed, freed, washed, forgiven, justified – 'just-if-I'd' never sinned.

Connected with water poured upon us in Holy Baptism. Placed in our mouths with bread and wine in Holy Communion. Taught and announced through the Bible into our ears and minds. Through Jesus God speaks His **One Word** upon us. The same Word He spoke upon Jesus as our substitute applies to you and me:

"This is My beloved son, this is My beloved daughter, with whom I am well pleased".

All for Jesus sake, the **'One and final Word'** of God. Amen

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen